

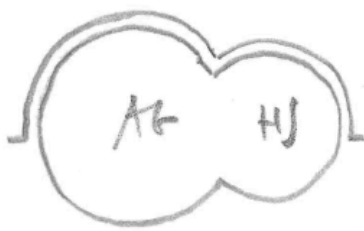
The Anthroposophical Society and the School of Spiritual Science – one world movement

Visions and images for the Anthroposophical Society

Marc Desaulles / April 2025

Transl. Christopher Houghton Budd

With this main topic on the agenda, the Country Representatives were invited to their annual spring conference at the Goetheanum in early April 2025. The introduction outlined how a common archetype of the whole organism should be shared throughout the world in order to enable coordinated future development. The different realities in the countries made the discussions multi-layered, but did not meet expectations in this respect. Several images will probably be necessary. And yet some Country Representatives had prepared themselves for the discussion and come with images. Here I will attempt to share six such images that accompany me in these regards. Some are already known, others are new.



The Anthroposophical Society as resurrection body of the Goetheanum building.

The first sketch¹ shows the double-domed gesture and the Society's dual membership. I have earlier elsewhere described this connection between the first Goetheanum and the refounded Society at the Christmas Conference.² The fact that the Society must be regarded as a building is already clear from the words spoken at its renewal.

After Rudolf Steiner had welcomed the participants of the congress the previous day and presented the founding statutes for the first time, he opened the meeting on Christmas Day 1923 by elaborating on what he himself called the foundation stone of this new society. To do this, he started from the threefold forces that are at work in human beings and in the surrounding cosmos. Through his vivid description, he invited the participants to juxtapose the macrocosmic dodecahedron with the microcosmic dodecahedron using the formative substance of these forces. He thus formed the foundation stone, which was then laid not in the ground, as ten years earlier for the original building, but in the souls of those present. The inferno may have scattered the forms of the first Goetheanum into the vastness of the macrocosm, but the power of the forms did not disappear with the flames. It remained spiritually present and could be brought back into the world and earthly development as a social body, based on two memberships that are polar opposites: the twin or two-step membership of the Society and the School of Spiritual Science. The first is based on free interest in and recognition of Anthroposophy (pink card), the second on free initiative and representation of Anthroposophy (blue card). In between, a third element emerges in the meeting of the two gestures, which alone creates a real social foundation for every form of institution or organization. A threefold gesture, for which the Goetheanum is the archetype and first expression. At the same time, it is the formative principle of all free spiritual life: free initiative, free recognition, and cooperation. The power of this social form is invisible, yet it is at work wherever people realize Anthroposophy together in one place. In this sense, the newly founded Anthroposophical Society can be understood as the resurrection body of the Goetheanum building (see adjacent image combining the plan and section of the first Goetheanum). It is neither dead nor vanished, but rather acts as a source for all free human activity, creating form so that freedom and responsibility in the world become possible, and can unfold, because they are protected by an appropriate social space.

¹ AG = Anthroposophical Society; HS = School of Spiritual Science; Geist, Seele, Leib = Spirit, soul, body.

² Marc Desaulles, The Evolving Body of the Anthroposophical Society in Peter Selg & Marc Desaulles Editors, p. 139, The Anthroposophical Society, SteinerBooks, 2016.

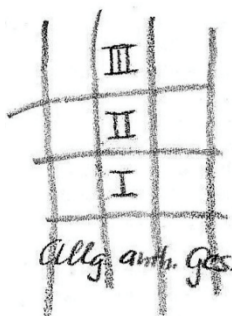


Geist
Seele
Leib

The Anthroposophical Society as incarnation body / The School of Spiritual Science as its soul.

This threefold source of power can also be drawn vertically, as this drawing demonstrates. Although with changed proportions, one can still sense the gesture of the two domes: the stage area now appears round and at the top, and the hall is below as a holding cup or crescent. The essence of Anthroposophy radiates in the space between the wooden group of the Representative of Humanity and the Red

Window, as a big 'A',³ illustrating how the spirit is never above, but lives within and through the body/soul. The Society reveals itself as a supporting body, a corporation capable of being anchored in all rights and legal contexts, and the School as its protected, and so remaining, free soul. This formulation, that the School is the soul of the Society, comes from Rudolf Steiner. And how fitting it is! It enables everyone to develop his or her own intimate experience of the differences between the Society and the School and consequently experience their relationship first-hand. The organism of Society and School is no longer experienced from the outside, but from within. Nothing here is theoretical. How little would the School of Spiritual Science be perceived if it had to live without being embedded in the Society, like an unembodied soul! And what would become of the true freedom of the School if it had to become a corporation itself? The health of this double organism depends greatly on the relationship between the Society and the School, and this health is essential for Anthroposophy, as a spirit, to work within civilisation beyond the boundaries of its own organism. Moreover, the mystery of Parsival and the Grail, which guides our 'I' development from previous lives throughout the entire epoch of the development of the Consciousness Soul, also shines through this image.



Nowhere is the School of Spiritual Science a Class without a Section, or a Section without a Class.

The adjacent 'grid' image was given by Rudolf Steiner himself on 27 December 1923, during the Christmas Conference. He used it to illustrate his understanding of the work of the School of Spiritual Science. Note that he wrote 'Allgemeine' (General) by hand to refer to the Society.⁴ There is no horizontal line below it to separate the Society from the world.⁵ However, there is one between the Society and the First Class of the School of Spiritual Science, as well as above it and between the other Classes. Where, though,

would Steiner have drawn the so-called institutions: The publishing house? The clinic? The new building? And so on, including the many others that had already been founded or have been founded since? (I will return to this question later.) Rudolf Steiner uses vertical lines to show the Sections. They run right through, even through the Society, from the world above to the world below. What can we read from this with regard to the School? Perhaps the most important thing is that the School does not mean the Classes alone. Nor does it mean the Sections alone. We should be more conscious in future of our habit of talking about School meetings when we mean Class meetings. And vice versa. In its future research, training and teaching, the Sections should also create a more conscious connection to the path of the Classes. In doing so, the wide exotericism of the Classes (yes, the Classes!) and the deepest esotericism of the Sections can be recognised as interacting characteristics and so become mutually strengthened in their working.⁶ This drawing by Rudolf Steiner fits well with the previous image. Indeed, one can superimpose them⁷ and find new perspectives for the work of the Society and the School.

³ Conceptually, at either end of the dual construct.

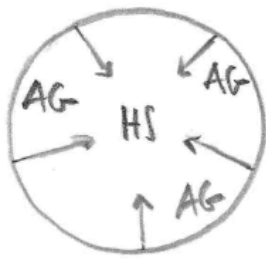
⁴ See treatment of this designation in the next section.

⁵ In contrast to Michaela Gloeckler's 'invisible line at the bottom'.

⁶ See Marc Desaulles, *The meeting of the poles depends on us*. March 2024.

⁷ http://www.hopespringseternal.world/fileadmin/MD_Two_Poles_Revised_.pdf

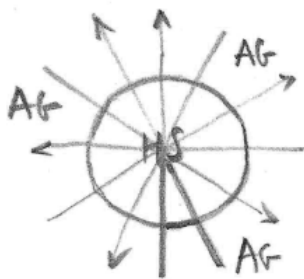
⁷ See front page illustration in *Anthroposophy Worldwide*, January 2025.



The Anthroposophical Society is anchored in the Circle of Country Societies from where it works towards a centre.

The circle represents the Anthroposophical Societies in countries throughout the world as they work toward a centre, namely, the Goetheanum in Dornach. The question here is: How should the worldwide Society be understood? The founding steps towards the Christmas Conference show one possible way of understanding this. After the fire, several new autonomous Anthroposophical Societies were formed, guided

by Rudolf Steiner, in various countries where sufficient people had come together and were actively working in anthroposophical circles. And where no Country Society emerged, smaller local Groups or Branches were formed. At Christmas 1923, all were invited to Dornach as delegates or members to establish together a universally human, and in that sense *general* Anthroposophical Society, with its headquarters at the Goetheanum. From this gesture, the large worldwide circle of today's, now 37, Country Societies gradually emerged, united in the General Anthroposophical Society. Essentially, the Country Societies only exist because there is a Goetheanum as a School of Spiritual Science; however, locally around the globe, it is primarily the Country Societies, Groups, and Branches that are in evidence. They are the Anthroposophical Society in the world. Unfortunately, the power of this perspective is largely lacking in the shaping of the General Anthroposophical Society today. Moreover, when a 'world' Society is spoken of – and this is still often happening – the Society in Dornach is meant. The reality of the Country Societies is thus overlooked, with the consequence that they are focusing on themselves in the first instance and risk not being in touch with the Goetheanum. A major step forward would be possible if these Country Societies accepted their responsibility, worked more closely together, and understood themselves as the foundation of the global organism. This, however, would require a paradigm shift: understanding the worldwide Society as beginning in the countries and leading to a worldwide circle of Country Societies merged with the General Society, collectively forming a worldwide Society. Indeed, this has already occurred with the Society's membership. One becomes a member through the country in which one lives. Membership cards are first signed at the country level out of this direct human relationship and only then sent to the General Anthroposophical Society for a second signature. This already applied to the 12,000 new membership cards issued after the Christmas Conference of 1923/24.⁸ One is then a member of the Anthroposophical Society both in the country and generally. Let us jointly increase this gesture of trust and mutual recognition among all the Societies in order to awaken the Anthroposophical Society from its slumber as a truly global one.



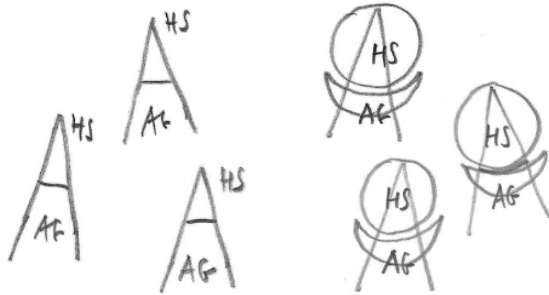
The Goetheanum as a School of Spiritual Science works from a single centre.

In this vignette, the circle represents the threshold between the School and the Society (i.e. the lowest line in the 'grid' drawing, with the Classes left undifferentiated). The radial lines represent the twelve Sections. Just as the Anthroposophical Society is locally anchored in the countries and derives its orientation from them – from the periphery, so to speak – the School of Spiritual Science provides its impulses for the entire world from a single centre: the Goetheanum in

Dornach. This centre coordinates the Class and Section work worldwide, as well as the research, training, and teaching that arise from this. Yet new Sections are still being founded in one country or another, sometimes even without involving the local Group or Country Society. Understandable as that may be for historical reasons, surely this is confusing? Wouldn't it be clearer to understand the existing so-called fields of work and their professional associations as Section fields and, through the Country Societies, bring them into resonance with the impulses from the Goetheanum? The same

⁸ The process shows how the initiative to become a member of both the Society and the School always rests with the member, pursuant on intentions and pre-natal resolves that ought not to be overlooked or gainsaid.

would apply to the work of the First Class with the local groups and branches of the Society. Thus, the Goetheanum, qua School of Spiritual Science, would live in the realities of the countries. According to Rudolf Steiner, this School is ‘an independent institution whose protection and care the Country Societies will naturally assume’ (GA 260). What is important here in this fifth drawing (and in the further thoughts below) is that there is no *second* circle, meaning there is no boundary between the Anthroposophical Society and the world, i.e. humanity at large. Again, where, then, are the many institutions and organisations of the Anthroposophical Movement to find their place? This question leads to the sixth image...



The Anthroposophical Movement is where free initiative and representation meet free recognition and support: in institutions.

These two sketches show the institutions of the Anthroposophical Movement in two different ways. On the left, they appear like excerpts from the previous vignette: a section field with its School component and its Society component, and open to the world. Schematically, each resembles

a capital ‘A’ for Anthroposophy manifesting itself in a place. On the right, exactly the same, but as a soul incarnated in a body, with the whole spiritualized by Anthroposophy. In other words, the Anthroposophical Movement exists wherever initiatives and representations of the anthroposophical ‘cause’ (School) receive respect and affirmation from their environment (Society), the two aspects meeting in one place in an active way. The Goetheanum is such a place, but there are many others: here a Waldorf school, there an anthroposophical clinic or therapeutic centre, there a biodynamic farm, etc. The diversity is immense and found worldwide. Every anthroposophical institution embodies this spirit: a centre that radiates and an environment that affirms, and through their encounter a place in which the Anthroposophical Movement finds expression and comes alive. The archetype of the first building is there, primordially human in its threefold nature, as the resurrection body, and as a social form and source for all human work.

These six images can become imaginative images and provide inspiration for our individual and collective stances regarding the Anthroposophical Movement – especially now, 100 years after the Christmas Conference, when we are searching for a shared archetype of the whole organism and embarking on the path to re-grasping its principles and purpose.